Press release

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Met Office helps in South Pole rescue drama

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The dramatic rescue of a doctor from the icy wastes of Antarctica over the last few days relied heavily on Met Office weather forecasts. Forecasters stationed at Mount Pleasant airfield in the Falkland Islands provided regular updates to the aircrew looking for a weather window to launch the rescue.

The forecasters used information from the Met Office's global weather forecasting system, satellites, and special weather observations carried out by members of the British Antarctic Survey at Rothera.

Weather proved critical for two stages of the flight but, with the Antarctic winter closing in, time was running out. The first stage from Punta Arenas in Chile to Rothera, Antarctica was delayed for 48 hours. The second stage of the flight from Rothera was then delayed by a further 48 hours because of bad visibility and blowing snow at the South Pole. The aircraft eventually reached the South Pole in the early hours of Wednesday (UK time) and touched down on the ice at a temperature of minus 67 °C.

Andy Page, Principal Met. Officer on the Falklands Islands, said: "Our primary role here is to support our armed forces in the South Atlantic but we were pleased to help with this rescue mission. It illustrates the international nature of the Met Office's work and shows that we go far beyond the TV forecasts that viewers see at home."

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